

Roemer House
2739 Old Glenview Road
Wilmette
Cook County
Illinois

HABS No. IL-1152

HABS
ILL,
16 - WILM,
3 -

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HABS
ILL,
16-WILM,
3-

ROEMER HOUSE
HABS No: IL - 1152

Location: 2739 Old Glenview Road, Wilmette, Cook County, Illinois. The legal location of the property is the NW1/4 of the SE1/4 of the SE1/4 of the SE1/4 of the SW1/4 of Section 32, Township 42N, Range 13E. It is mapped on the Evanston U.S.G.S. 7.5' Topographic Quadrangle sheet.

Present Use Demolished 1988. No Federal funds involved.

Significance: A good example of an 1870's Illinois farm house on a sale continuously owned by one family from 1865 to 1987.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: Circa 1870. See (2) below.
2. Original and subsequent owners. The entire E1/2 of the SW1/4 of Section 32, T42N, R13E, a portion of which includes the Roemer House, was first purchased from the federal government on 10 march 1844 by Sarah MacBride. Peter Roemer, the great grandfather of the living Roemer children, purchased the property on the 29th of May, 1865. It has been in the family until the recent sale to Wilmette Park Plaza Associates and subsequent sale to private individuals.

It is unclear exactly when the first structure was built on this portion of the section. Records dating before the Great Chicago Fire of 9 October 1871 were destroyed. The tract index (listing property owners) and certain plat maps were the only tools left to investigate. These showed a structure on the property in 1861 (Burhans and Van Vechten 1861). The 1870 (Van Vechten) map was not readable. There was a structure shown on the 1886 plat (Snyder 1886).

It is not clear from the records (Chicago Title and Trust Co.) if Peter Renzel (who purchased the E1/2 of the SW1/4 of Section 32 in 1847) constructed a building on the present Roemer property or if Peter Roemer, who purchased it from Renzel in 1865, built a dwelling there. The Roemer family history states that the present brick structure, built in-or-around 1870, was built on the foundation of an earlier frame structure. This structure reportedly burned and a mason, who owed

Roemer some money, supplied the brick for the present house. The present house is slightly larger than the frame building, according to the family. The members of the Roemer family, Mrs. Marie Harrison, Roland Roemer, and Lawrence Roemer, agreed that their father, George Roemer, was born in the house in 1880.

The documentary history for the Roemer Site consists of family history (primarily an oral history), plat maps indicating that the site was owned by a Roemer in 1865, and tract index information that is entirely too general to pinpoint a construction date for the existing house (Wilmette Historical Museum).

Although an intensive search was made for a complete abstract to the property, none could be located. The Roemer family remembered seeing a copy among family records but could not find it at the time of investigations in 1988.

Another segment of the oral history of the site contends that a log cabin was located near the present house. Although the family history is unclear on this point, the Roemers all agreed that the story placed the cabin in the middle of what is now a circle drive, also the highest point on the property.

In summary, the documentary history of the Roemer House is made-up of a large number of oral history statements and an incomplete set of documents. Little exists to pinpoint the construction date.

3. Alterations and additions. The floor plan on the lower level has been significantly altered. That of the upper floor, though slightly altered, contains elements of the original plan. According to the Roemer family, the house was originally constructed with two separate living units, each with its own living and dining areas. It was set up that way prior to demolition in 1988. Photos provided by Lawrence Roemer reported to have been taken around the turn of the 20th century, demonstrate that the house has undergone little exterior change.

B. Historical Context:

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character. The present structure (now located on segments of two lots) is a brick, two-story, gable-front-and-wing dwelling of the National Folk style. It has a cross-gabled, low-pitched roof with asphalt shingles. A single story frame porch is attached to the western and northern sides of the norther wing. A board and batten frame summer kitchen is attached to the south wall of the east-west wing.
2. Condition of fabric. At time of recording, poor. Demolished 1988.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions approximately 23 meters by 9.6 meters.
2. Foundations: Brick
3. Walls: Brick
4. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: Frame summer kitchen or shed on south elevation. Wood front porch with decorative brackets, may have been added ca. 1890.
5. Chimneys: One Chimney at south end of east west wing.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors. The main entrance doorway in the north-facing wall has a transom above the door and the entrance on the north wall of the east-west wing is arched with bricks.
 - b. Windows and shutters. All of the windows, including those at the cellar level, are arched. The wings of the main house contain four-over-four light, double-hung sash with limestone sills. The windows in the summer kitchen addition and in the upper floor of the south facing wall of the east-west wing are six-over-six light, double-hung sash.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape or covering: Cross-gabled low-pitched roof with asphalt shingles
 - b. Cornice eaves: Simple wood eaves

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: See sketches attached
2. Stairways: No significant features
3. Flooring: Wood and linoleum
4. Wall and ceiling finishes: Lathe and plaster
5. Decorative features and trim: Simple wood trim. No decorative features

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Facing north towards Old Glenview Road.
2. Outbuildings: None survive. Oral history suggested that a cabin was located west of the house. Cultural materials collected from a test pit were non-diagnostic, but ashy material may have indicated the outline of the cabin.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings: None

B. Early Views: Family Photographs

C. Interviews: Roemer Family

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: Westover, Allan R. "Archeological Investigations at the Roemer house in Wilmette, Illinois" Midwestern Archaeological Research Center, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois 1988.

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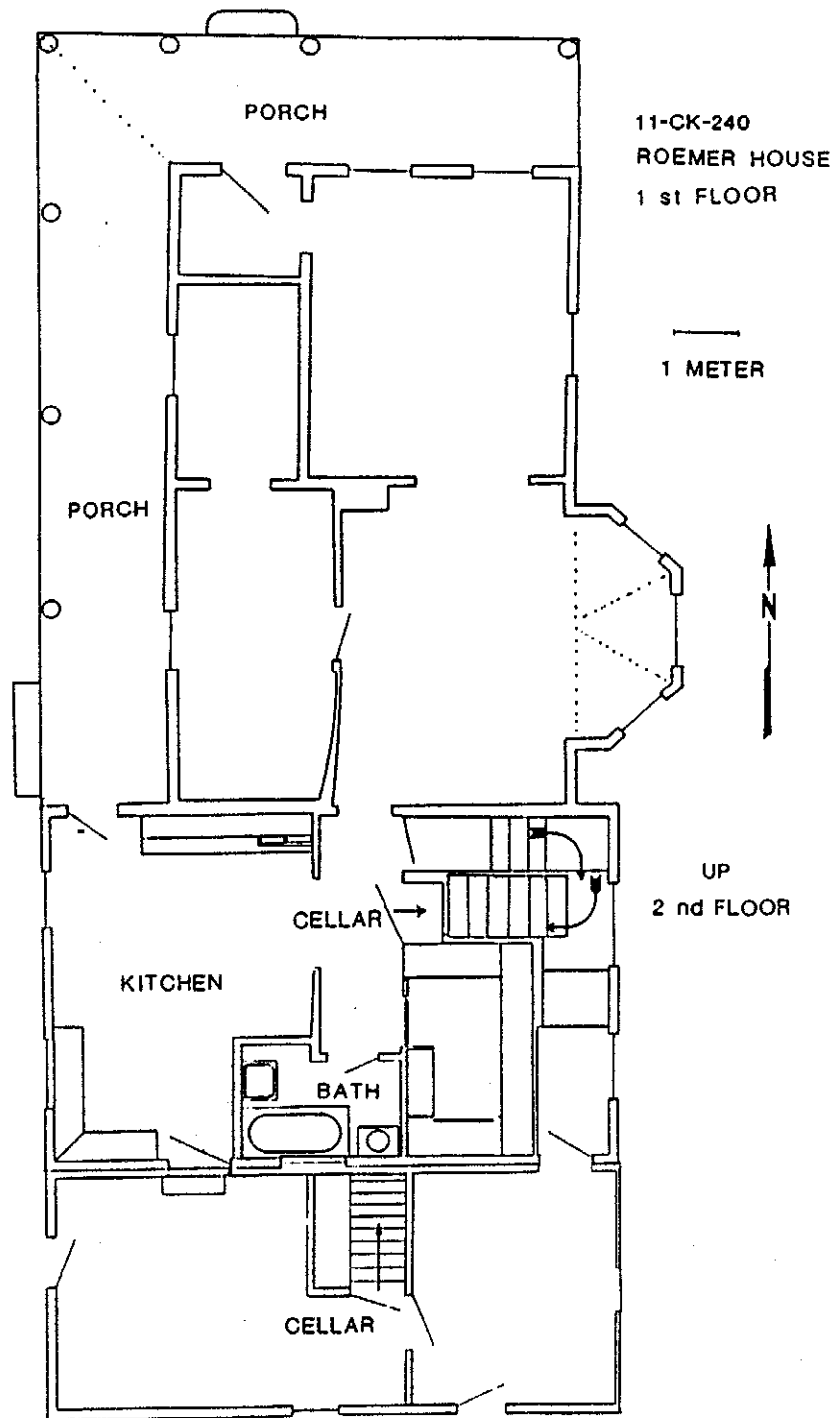


Figure 12: Floor Plan of the First Floor

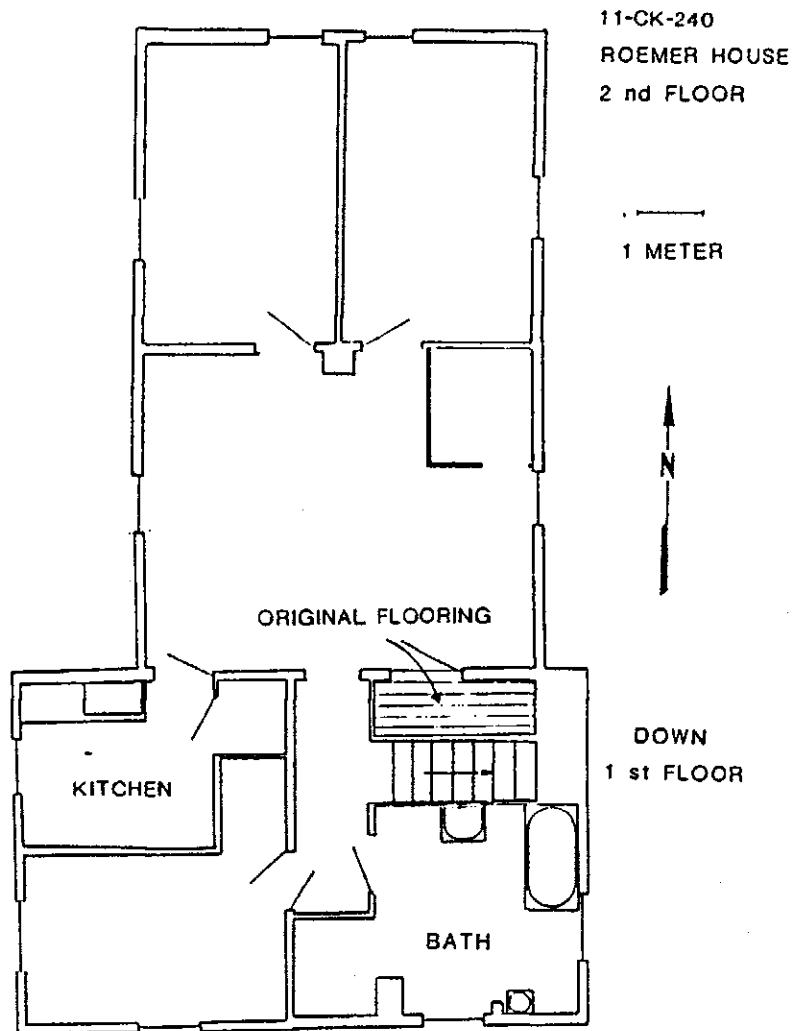


Figure 13: Second Story Floor Plan